



THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SCHOOL



REIMAGINING LEARNING

A K-12 Experiential Learning School

Handbook for Parents

ADDRESS

4/358A, Chaitanya Avenue,
Anna Salai Road, Palavakkam,
Chennai 600041

CONTACT

🌐 www.sunnysidelearning.org
✉ sabina@sunnysidelearning.org
📷 [@sunnyside_learning](https://www.instagram.com/sunnyside_learning)

WHAT IF WE'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG ABOUT EDUCATION?

What if school, as we know it, was never designed for children? What if, in our pursuit of "educating" children, we've stripped learning of its joy, childhood of its essence, and individuality of its space to grow?

Think about it. A child is born with curiosity hardwired into them—asking endless questions, exploring, touching, experimenting. They learn to walk, talk, and navigate the world without structured lessons or grading systems. And then, one day, they enter school.

From that moment, their learning is no longer theirs. It is dictated—when to learn, what to learn, how to learn. Their pace doesn't matter, their interests don't count, and their natural way of understanding the world is replaced with schedules, syllabi, and assessments. Learning, once intrinsically rewarding, becomes something they must endure. Childhood is no longer about growing; it becomes about performing.

A System Designed for Control, Not Learning

Education today is built around compliance, efficiency, and predictability—not around how children actually learn.

- We teach subjects in isolation, stripping knowledge of its context. But no real-world problem is ever solved using just math or just history.
- We demand children fit into one mold, yet expect them to grow into unique individuals.
- We train them to recall information rather than think for themselves. Then, we wonder why they struggle to adapt to an ever-changing world.
- We place learning within four walls—as if the world outside has nothing to teach.

And perhaps most damaging of all, we have convinced ourselves that this is normal.

RECLAIMING LEARNING, RECLAIMING CHILDHOOD

At Sunnyside, we are not trying to fix the system. We are stepping outside of it entirely—because learning was never meant to be standardised.

- Here, learning is not confined to books and tests. It is lived.
- Here, children are not products of a system. They are individuals, each on their own journey.
- Here, education is not about preparing them for exams. It is about preparing them for life.

We do not take convention as schooling. We do not strip learning of its joy. We do not believe in forcing knowledge upon children. Instead, we create an environment where children are free to think, explore, question, and grow at their own pace—because that is what real education looks like.

Not an alternative way of schooling. But the way it was always meant to be.

What is Sunnyside?

Sunnyside is a K-12 Experiential Learning School designed to honor the natural way children learn and grow. Rooted in constructivist principles and Montessori values, Sunnyside offers a pressure-free, non-coercive environment where learning is meaningful, hands-on, and deeply connected to real-world contexts.

Here, education is more than academics—it's about nurturing thinkers, problem-solvers, and empathetic individuals. Through interdisciplinary projects, personalised learning paths, and a strong foundation in values, Sunnyside creates an ecosystem where children thrive as confident, self-directed learners.

VISION AND MISSION



Vision

Our vision is to create an environment where education mirrors the natural way children learn—through hands-on, experiential activities that connect deeply with the real world. We aim to make learning meaningful, contemporary, and reflective of the challenges and opportunities in today's society, equipping children with the skills to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Mission

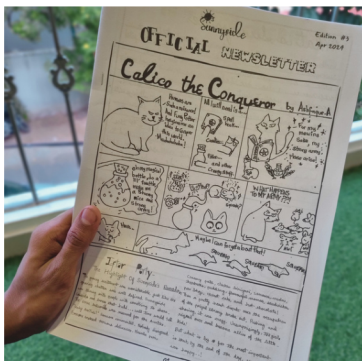
Our mission is to nurture self-directed learners who are not only academically capable but also strong in character. By blending Montessori principles, self-directed learning, and strong values, we empower children to explore, make choices, and build critical thinking skills at their own pace. We cultivate emotional intelligence, creativity, resilience, and a strong moral foundation, enabling children to grow into compassionate, adaptable, and responsible individuals who are equipped to navigate and thrive in life's complexities with confidence and purpose.

OUR CORE VALUES

Education is not just about what children learn—it is about who they become in the process. At Sunnyside, everything we do is built on these five core values:

- **Trust** – We trust children’s ability to learn, explore, and make decisions for themselves. Mistakes are not failures; they are part of the learning journey.
- **Respect** – We respect the individuality of every child, their pace of learning, and their unique way of thinking. We cultivate respect for self, others, and the world around us.
- **Independence** – Learning should not be something given; it should be something discovered. We encourage independence so that children take ownership of their education and their lives.
- **Collaboration** – Learning is not a solitary act. It happens through conversations, relationships, and shared experiences. Instead of instructing, we ask—“Can we try it this way?”—nurturing collaboration rather than compliance.
- **Kindness** – The way children are treated shapes the way they treat others. We cultivate an environment of warmth, empathy, and kindness, ensuring that learning happens in an atmosphere of encouragement, not fear.

At Sunnyside, we do not simply teach subjects. We nurture thinkers, doers, and change makers. Because education should never be about just getting ahead –it should be about growing into the best version of oneself.



PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH



At Sunnyside, we believe that education is not about forcing information into children but creating an environment where they can actively build knowledge, skills, and character. Rooted in constructivism, our approach nurtures curiosity, self-direction, collaboration, and metacognition—encouraging children to reflect on their thinking, refine their approaches, and deepen their understanding—ensuring every child grows as an individual and a thinker.

LEARNING BY DOING

Children don't learn by sitting quietly and listening. Through hands-on, experiential activities rooted in real-world contexts, they discover, reflect, and develop problem-solving abilities. Our constructivist approach intertwines critical thinking with meaningful application.

FREEDOM TO EXPLORE

Guided by Montessori principles, we trust children to take ownership of their learning. They have the freedom to make choices, explore at their own pace, and gradually build independence in a supportive and structured environment.

PURPOSEFUL PROJECTS

Our project-based learning fosters self-direction and responsibility. Children engage in interdisciplinary projects that integrate science, civics, math, and language arts, ensuring that academic subjects are thoroughly covered. This approach builds competency and confidence while helping students connect academic concepts to real-world applications. Facilitators guide, not dictate, ensuring students lead their learning journey.

SKILLS OVER CONTENT

In a rapidly evolving world, knowledge changes, but skills endure. We prioritize emotional intelligence, adaptability, communication, and critical thinking over rote memorization. These are the foundations children need to thrive in any future.

A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY

Mixed-age groups foster peer learning, respect, and belonging. Younger children are inspired by older peers, and older children deepen their understanding by supporting others. This dynamic creates a rich, real-world microcosm of collaboration and shared growth.

LEARNING JOURNEY AT SUNNYSIDE



At Sunnyside, we design the learning journey to nurture children holistically, from early exploration to readiness for higher education. Our aspiration is to guide children toward self-actualization, helping them realize their full potential by fostering independence, creativity, and emotional resilience. Divided into four cohorts, the progression ensures personalized growth at each stage.

PRIMARY (2.5-7 YRS)

An experiential Early Learning environment inspired by Montessori principles, nurturing sensory exploration, practical life skills, and strong foundations in literacy and numeracy through hands-on, real-world and nature-based explorations.

ELEMENTARY (8-10 YRS)

A blend of Montessori principles and project-based learning, mapped to NCERT(CBSE), IGCSE and American standards (CCSS, NGSS, NCSS), encouraging curiosity and skill-building.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (11-13 YRS)

Interdisciplinary and exploratory, with emphasis on applying foundational knowledge through projects and real-world challenges mapped to NCERT(CBSE) and American standards(CCSS, NGSS, NCSS)

HIGH SCHOOL (14+ YRS)

Certification with NIOS (National Level Board of Education under the Ministry of Education, Government of India. Students receive mentorship to identify interests, select higher education pathways, and pursue internships, enabling informed career choices.

With a certification from the NIOS, Sunnyside graduates are well-equipped to pursue higher education in any domain, both within India and internationally, enabling them to explore diverse career pathways with global recognition.

THE THREE-PART LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Every learner's journey consists of:

- **Foundations:** Core academic subjects (math, science, language arts, social sciences, environmental sciences, visual arts) provide a strong base for lifelong learning.
- **Exploration:** Self-directed, interdisciplinary projects in areas like psychology, entrepreneurship, ornithology, and geopolitics nurture curiosity and critical thinking.
- **Specialisation:** Tailored higher education pathways, mentorship, and advanced projects allow students to delve deeper into their chosen interests and prepare for college and beyond.

PREPARING FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Recognizing that careers of the future are unpredictable, Sunnyside focuses on equipping children with adaptable skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and the ability to learn and unlearn. These essential skills ensure they are prepared to navigate a dynamic world confidently, no matter what the future holds.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- **Flexible Learning Journeys:**

The curriculum grows naturally through students' interests, discoveries, and meaningful conversations. Peer mentorship plays a vital role, with children sharing skills and leading activities to support and inspire one another. This approach makes learning dynamic, collaborative, and deeply engaging, encouraging children to actively shape their own educational experiences.

- **Inspiring Reading Habits:**

We place a strong emphasis on building a culture of reading. Whether through shared book discussions, creating personal libraries, or integrating reading into interdisciplinary projects, we encourage children to explore literature as a gateway to ideas, imagination, and critical thinking.

- **Exposure to Diverse Perspectives:**

Students interact with professionals, college students, and experts across fields, broadening their worldview and understanding of academic and career opportunities.

- **Community Engagement:**

Learning extends beyond the classroom, with projects tied to local and global issues like biodiversity, waste management, and climate action.

- **Independent and Collaborative Learning:**

While children work independently to explore their interests, collaboration is encouraged through group projects, mixed-age interactions, and shared learning experiences.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: CREATING SPACES FOR GROWTH

At Sunnyside, the learning environment is carefully designed to support every aspect of a child's development. It integrates the physical, cultural, and communal dimensions of learning to create a holistic ecosystem where children thrive.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Our spaces are open, inviting, and thoughtfully designed to inspire creativity and calmness.

- **Wide Collaborative Spaces:** Open halls and shared areas encourage group learning, presentations, and discussions.
- **Breakout Zones:** Small, quiet spaces for independent or small-group work foster focus and personalization.
- **Nature-Based Learning:** Outdoor spaces connect children to the natural world, blending exploration with learning.
- **Accessibility:** Montessori-inspired classrooms ensure children can freely access tools and resources, nurturing independence.

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

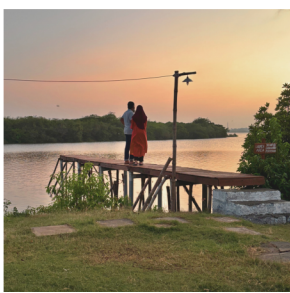
Our cultural environment is built on strong, universal values that nurture respect, kindness, and inclusivity.

- **Mutual Trust and Respect:** We foster an atmosphere where every child and adult feels valued, respected, and supported.
- **Kindness and Empathy:** Interactions are grounded in compassion, ensuring a warm and nurturing community.
- **A Safe and Non-Judgmental Space:** Children are encouraged to express themselves freely, take risks, and learn without fear of criticism, creating an environment where they feel secure and valued.
- **Celebration of Individuality:** We embrace the uniqueness of every child, creating a space where they can grow into confident and thoughtful individuals.



PARTNERING WITH PARENTS & COMMUNITY

At Sunnyside, we recognize that a child's learning journey thrives through active collaboration. Parents are key stakeholders, shaping consistent environments between home and school, while the community enriches learning by offering diverse perspectives and real-world experiences. Together, we foster a supportive network that nurtures each child's growth holistically.



PARENT ENGAGEMENT

At Sunnyside, parents are viewed as vital partners in their child's educational journey.

- **Shared Responsibility:** We work closely with parents to align the home and school environments, ensuring consistency in nurturing children.
- **Collaborative Growth:** Regular dialogues, feedback sessions, and workshops empower parents to actively contribute to their child's holistic development.
- **Parent-Facilitator Relationship:** Building a strong bond between facilitators and parents ensures every child receives the support they need.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Learning extends beyond the school, integrating real-world contexts and community contributions.

- **Local Engagement:** Projects tied to local issues, like biodiversity and waste management, build awareness and responsibility.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Collaboration with professionals and external organizations broadens children's understanding of the world.
- **Strong Connections:** By involving the wider community, Sunnyside creates a network of meaningful relationships that enrich children's learning experiences.



FACILITATORS: GUIDING THE LEARNING JOURNEY

At Sunnyside, facilitators are mentors who guide and inspire rather than teach in the traditional sense. They foster an environment where children actively construct knowledge through exploration and discovery.

- **Enablers of Growth:** Facilitators create opportunities for children to engage with ideas, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving.
- **Personalised Support:** They observe each child's unique needs, tailoring guidance to nurture self-direction and independence.
- **Collaborative Mentors:** Facilitators interact with children as co-learners, asking thought-provoking questions and promoting dialogue instead of giving instructions.



ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS TRACKING

At Sunnyside, assessment is a continuous and comprehensive process, designed to nurture growth rather than assign scores. Our approach emphasizes self-awareness, collaboration, and meaningful feedback.

- **Ongoing Assessments**

Learning is tracked through portfolios, discussions, debates, presentations, and hands-on projects. These methods provide a holistic view of each child's progress over time.

- **Self- and Peer-Assessments**

Students engage in self-assessment using rubrics, encouraging reflection and responsibility. Peer-to-peer assessments foster collaboration and mutual feedback, building critical evaluation skills.

- **No Routine Exams**

Traditional exams are excluded, except during Grades 9 to 12, where students prepare for certifications through NIOS. Here, assessments include a mix of projects, quizzes, and credit-based evaluations, ensuring college readiness.

By blending diverse assessment methods with a supportive environment, Sunnyside ensures children grow confidently, focusing on understanding, skill development, and personal achievement.

IF THIS SPEAKS TO YOU,
LET'S CONNECT.



At Sunnyside, we don't just educate; we nurture. We believe that learning is not about following a system but about creating individuals who think deeply, act compassionately, and adapt confidently. By rethinking education, we reclaim what matters—childhood, individuality, and a lifelong love for learning.

**This is not an alternative.
This is how education
should be.**